



Fights over *Friday Night Lights*

Truth? or Distortion?

By Mason Braswell and Matthew Sternberg

During H.G. "Buzz" Bissinger's visit to Montgomery Bell Academy, Mason Braswell and Matthew Sternberg interviewed him regarding his best-selling book *Friday Night Lights*. This article consists of that interview, an interview with Mrs. Snow, of Hobbs, New Mexico, and a review of *Friday Night*



Lights. *Friday Night Lights*: More than an average football tale

H.G. Bissinger's *Friday Night Lights* exceeds all expectations of a non-fiction book. *Friday Night Lights* boasts an intriguing plot that hurls the reader into the plight of the citizens in the West Texas town of Odessa. Bissinger illustrates the town not as simply a small community plagued with economic, racial, and educational problems, but as a microcosm of America.

To chronicle the plight of the citizens in Odessa, Bissinger spent a year as a member of the Permian High School community and was able to portray the town realistically, revealing

both its flaws and its virtues. In this single speck appearing from the middle of the rolling planes of Texas, it is obvious that football is the engine and the opium for its populace, as is evident from the six-million dollar football stadium, which is capable of seating 20,000 fans. Bissinger illustrates this American football town in such a way that it appears more a work of fiction than not. From a coin toss that decides the outcome of a whole football season to a week-long court room trial to decide whether a student passed or failed so he could play on his school's football team, Bissinger depicts the town for all of its racial and gender-based contrasts. Some girls of Odessa are told to "dumb down" and not to attempt a reasonable education, for their role is to remain

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Behind the Scenes at *Acharnians*

By Graham Coburn

I'm sure *all* of you went and enjoyed *The Acharnians*, the recent MBA/Harpeth Hall theater production. I know that if you didn't go, you at least saw the teaser the day before the play opened. I, unlike most of you, went to the play every night it played, and then some. Why did I do this, you may ask. The answer is simple: I didn't go to *see* the play--I was in it, working alongside Bennett Davidson, Brendan Mayhew, Garrett Anglin, Johnny Mishu, Eric Vasilevskis, and such admirable high schoolers as Chris Schuller.

Putting on a play isn't as easy as some of you might think. It takes a lot of work and long hours. Many plays include working long after rehearsal is supposed to end and going nearly to

midnight during dress rehearsals. That was not the case with this play, however. Mr. Morrison kept a tight schedule and stuck to it. We finished earlier than we would have with most plays (just ask Bennett), but it was still a lot of work.

The play started out with auditions. Those were fairly simple. We filled out an application with past experience and

other info. Then we divided into groups

and read parts. The cast list was posted a few days later. Six eighth-graders were on the list--an amazing feat that shows the raw talent and acting skill of the MBA eighth grade.

Rehearsals began with a simple reading of the script. We discussed Mr. Morrison's vision of the play and went away thinking "this could be fun."



The "Fearsome" Firm -
Bennett Davidson and Eric
Vasilevskis

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His Views...

Bissinger: Continued

close to their respective football player without rising above him. There is little emphasis on education in a town where athletes do not take SAT's given their slight "interference" with the football season, and showing up for class is all a football player needs to do occasionally so as to pass a course.

My first assumption was that *Friday Night Lights* would be just another account of a heroic high school football team. However, Bissinger is able to ingeniously intertwine a truthful depiction of Odessa with both a tragic and dramatic account of the determination of a single team. H.G. Bissinger defines a town--and America--as no other non-fiction author can. *Friday Night Lights* is without doubt an enthralling book of struggle, devotion, and failure.

An interview with Mr. Bissinger, himself:

TOH: You went to an all boys' school; what influence did that have on your writing?

Bissinger: Well, it didn't necessarily have any affect on my writing, but it was more important that I went to Andover, which had a great newspaper that came out every week. And for someone who wanted to be a newspaper reporter, this was a phenomenal experience. We had a great school paper that everyone cared about; it gave me the opportunity to appreciate almost what it would be like to be a newspaper journalist. The only thing bad about an all boys' school is that there are no girls. But that's more of a personal influence, not a professional influence.

TOH: How did you choose the Permian team in Odessa, Texas?

Bissinger: Once I decided I wanted to write a book about high school football, I thought of three places just based on the mythology. The first was Western

Pennsylvania, quarterback valley, where Joe Namath and Dan Marino came from, and where Tony Dorsette played. I thought about Ohio. When a kid is born in Ohio, they actually put a little football in the crib. Paul Brown had coached there, very famous coach, ended up coaching the Cleveland Browns, then the Bengals. Then I realized that Texas was synonymous with high school football. It was most famous for it, and I really wanted to live in Texas. Then it was a matter of where in Texas. I wanted to find a place that was out there, so I

priorities--about academics and football, real gender inequality, allowing kids to play hurt--amazed me. It was just too much. These kids were expected to play like pro athletes, and it was clear that they held the burden of the hopes and dreams of the town on their shoulders. On the other hand, I am a great sports fan, and the Dartmouth and Jets sporting events are some of the most exquisite I have seen. Except for the 20,000 on Friday night, there is nothing like it.



Buzz Bissinger

"Then I realized that Texas was synonymous with high school football. . .there's nothing like it."

Given Mr. Bissinger's derogatory portrayal of Odessa in *Friday Night Lights*, Mason Braswell interviewed Mrs. Snow, a resident of Odessa for three years, to illustrate a separate point of view.

How many years did you live in Odessa?

I lived in Odessa a little over two years. I lived in Hobbs (which is just outside of Odessa) while I was in school.

Do you agree with Mr. Bissinger's point of view on Odessa?

I don't think Mr. Bissinger has a point of view on Odessa. He has a view on the football team and Permian High School.

Did you find that your opportunities were limited as a woman in Odessa?

No, I didn't see the same Odessa that he portrayed in the book. He generalized what was going on with Permian and the football program. He applied it to the city itself, and that's not what I found at all. There were three

was interested in West Texas. I called a guy who had been to Odessa, and he said that you have got to go to Odessa--there's nothing like it. It was the stadium, the tradition, the commitment; this was the place to go.

TOH: What new experiences did you have in the Permian Basin and Odessa?

Bissinger: I knew that they loved football and there was a tradition, and it was a great team, but it was very eye-opening and disturbing how crazy and insane they had become. The intensity was one that I had never witnessed. It was just a matter of 20,000 fans filling a stadium and abusing these kids. You know, winning at all costs. This place's

Her Views

high schools in Odessa, and you can do math to figure out that there were, therefore, more students at the other schools than at Permian. The football situation is a story in itself, and I agree with most of what he said about that. It's just that it didn't affect every person who lived in Odessa. As a person who lived in Odessa, I disagree with his portrayal of the whole city as being what that school was and what that football team was.

What sort of relationship, if any, did you have with the Permian/Odessa football team?

When I lived there, I had a two-year-old daughter so football, even though it was a big part, not just of that school or that city even, was not part of my life. In the city I grew up in, our football was a big deal. The football environment was very much like it was portrayed all over that part of the country, and I don't know about other parts of the country at that time because that's where we were. But it was a very big thing. There were some things that needed to be fixed in those situations, and some have, some haven't. That was not unique to Odessa or to Permian High. But, it was very peripheral to me, which is why I take exception to the book. The portrayal of every person in Odessa's being wrapped up in football as if it were an end to all there ever was in their life with the end of football season is not the way I remember it.

Did you feel that your opportunities were limited because of other "more important" traditions?

During football season, it's a big thing. When you listen to the news on Friday night, you're going to hear the scores, and you know who the rivalries are. You did have the problem of students playing on the football team that probably shouldn't have if they were making their grades honestly, that kind

of thing. But his portrayal in the book is very much accurate to the detail of people playing on the team who shouldn't have. But it's not and was not then all there was to life in Odessa. They had kind of a dynasty because they won. That was just the reason that he picked that football team to write about. They were winners. They beat us a lot. Probably during football season, you don't have as many football teams as you do here. And so



Mrs. Snow

I guess it's more intensified than it is here because we (Nashville) have more schools. It's much the same; you are wrapped up in your team, but the city does not revolve around the football team and the football season. **Did the people of Odessa consider football to be the highlight of life?**

It was for some people. If you had a son playing on that team or one of the other teams during the football season, you watched them play our kids. You pretty much moved into the next season, and it wasn't a big deal. I didn't see life revolving around the

football team. Certainly, not my life--I had a two-year-old daughter. I knew what was going on with the football team and the rivalries, and I think most people had the same perspective on it that I did. There was quite a bit of talk and interviews and a lot in the news about a bond to build the stadium. It showed there was a lot of support and a lot of interest in the football team. But life did not stop when the football season was over, and certainly, the majority of the people in Odessa probably had the same answer I did. If you go to a football game, it's fun, but unless you go to the school or you have a player on that team, you're going to root for your city as if they are in the state finals. Sure, you're going to want them to win. I just didn't feel the same rabid sense of obsession that he portrayed in the book.

Did you notice any distinct racial and cultural divisions Odessa?

Sure, you do, just like you do in any city. I also felt that he had his timeline wrong on that. Some of the things that he described in the book did happen in Odessa; they just happened in the fifties and sixties. I would say that overall I would object to the way he generalized an issue in saying that this is the way that people in Odessa are. There are close to 100,000 people in Odessa, and it's really hard to put that kind of generalization on that many people, and he is incorrect, and I can point out specifics. There are going to be negatives as he said, but there's also going to be just the opposite of what he said. I didn't find there to be as much racism as he portrayed in the book. By no means is it absent of racism, and I think that Odessa has seen every bit of that, like most of the United States did, but I think that the era he's talking about occurred earlier, and I would take exception to that.

Restaurants

Yo Quiero Taco Bell!

A Mexican Restaurant Review

By J. B. [Chubs] Hardin

La Paz

La Paz is a very good restaurant. I found a few things that I did not prefer. One is the price. It's a bit high for a family dinner (especially when you're not even sure that your five-year-old sister will even eat what she orders). The second may not be wrong for some people, but for me everything is just a bit too spicy. It seems like the water is even spicy. Plus the food and setting aren't especially Mexican. A few things good about La Paz are the service



and the cleanliness. The restaurant seems like it might be the perfect place for a date.

Las Palmas

To begin with, the storefront location is not my favorite place for a restaurant. The one thing that is really surprising is that they charge extra for additional chips. The meat there is too crispy for my taste, and every other bite seems to leave a burnt taste in your mouth. My favorite thing about it is the portions are big with a great price. The booths are a little small for four people. I was amazed by their selection of side items.

San Antonio Taco Company

SATCO is its nickname, and it's been a Nashville

tradition for a long time. The one bad thing about SATCO is that they don't have enough locations and it is far away from my house. (But it is close to my mom's work so I eat there a lot.) The good thing about SATCO is that it is a good Mexican fast-food restaurant. It would be a little better if the portions were bigger. SATCO does fine catering to any events. I think that the service is great also. Maybe that's because they know me by name.

U.S. Border Cantina

Last, but definitely not least, this restaurant is by far my favorite. It has good food, good service, and great prices. The folks are friendly, and the crowd shows it. You usually have to wait for a table, but sometimes you can call ahead and get your name on the list. You can't beat the cheese dip, AND even my little sister likes eating here.

MEXICAN RESTAURANT REVIEW

1 = Excellent, 2 = Good, 3 = Fair, 4 = Poor

	La Paz	Las Palmas	SATCO	U.S. Border Cantina
Wait for Table	1	1	1	2
Wait for Food	3	3	1	2
Service	2	3	N/A	1
Mexican Feel	2	3	1	3
Overall Variety	2	4	3	1
Seafood Variety	2	3	4	1
Appetizer Variety	2	1	2	3
Veggie Variety	3	2	4	1
Side Dish Variety	3	1	2	3
Flavor of Cheese Dip	3	1	2	1
Flavor of Beans	3	2	3	1
Presentation	1	3	4	2
Portions	2	2	3	1
Cleanliness	1	1	2	1
Atmosphere	1	4	4	2
Price	4	2	3	1
OVERALL	35	36	39	26

The views expressed in this article are those of the author, not the Top of the Hill staff and advisors.

Google List-Toppers

Britney Tops the List

By Jimmy Anderson

No, Britney Spears is not Number One on the charts or the most bizarre person of 2003. Britney Spears is the Number One hit on Google. Yes, that's right. People searched her on Google more than anything else in the world. She was in close competition with the children's favorite character of the year, Harry Potter. And to wrap it up, the Matrix

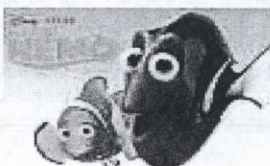


rounded up the top three. Odd, considering I have barely heard of that name this year except from Daniel van Jelgerhuis. (I'm sure he greatly helped that third position.) Here is how the others turned out:

4. Shakira -- ??? Weird, considering you haven't heard that name in about three years.
5. Beckham -- Wow, this guy even got his own movie, "Bend it Like Beckham." hmmm
6. 50 Cent -- Yes that's right, rapper 50

Cent made the top ten. (I sincerely hope none of you guys looked him up.)

7. Iraq -- I'm sure some people had to look up what Iraq even was.



8. Lord of the Rings -- No surprise with it being the hit movie of the year. A little surprising it was this far down the list and was beat out by Harry Potter.

9. Kobe Bryant -- Is anyone else getting tired of hearing about him?

10. Tour de France -- ? Yeah, I don't have an answer for that either.

Prince Charles took the gold medal in Britain. Wow, nothing exciting must happen there (Britain). Lo and behold Winnie the Pooh, of all things, came in third. A great classic, but why would you look up that? What is going on across the ocean? (Second place was some soap opera nobody cares about.)



In Japan the most popular query was Grindam. Has anyone heard of him? The most popular woman was Yuko Ogura. Anyone heard of her as

well? The most popular man was Beckham (surprise, surprise).

And now the Germans. Talk about life. The top item researched in Germany was Yu Gi Oh, a Pokemon style game. Shucks, too bad we missed out on that one. It must have something to do with the name -- "Yu Gi Oh."

The Canadians went with the movie "Finding Nemo." Who would look up an orange animated fish? By the way, "Nemo" in Latin means "no one," hence, "Finding No One."

Finally, we get to France. If you thought the French were weird before, you will really think they are now. The most popular hit on Google in France was.....drum roll..... the rail service, SNCF. Yes, a rail service. Sounds fascinating if you ask me. So



fascinating that CNN doesn't even know what it stands for.

Well, my space is up. A surprising no show on the list was Pam Anderson. She is keeping it on the low side, taking care of me more this year. We have a great bond going right now. In 2004 look for Howard Dean to make the list since no one knows who he is, and Paris Hilton, who is already the most talked about person this year. . .

Around MBA

Excuses, Excuses

By Will Orman

Here is a list of excuses that we use so we don't seem like we are doing something stupid...

No, Mrs. Steele, I swear I'm not eating anything! Honestly, I was just working out my jaw.

Mr. Bernatavitz, I didn't do my Latin homework because I was watching the Cubs game.

Dr. Marro, that's not my shirttail, that's just something I sewed on to the back of my shirt for looks.

M r s .
Christeson, I wasn't doing homework during assembly, I was taking notes on what the speaker was saying so I c o u l d remember it later.

M r .
Thurmond, I did my math homework,

but it must have gotten lost in the mail. Mr. Anderson, I didn't bring my book to class today because I memorized it to save space in my backpack.

Mr. Brown, I wasn't sleeping, I just have my notes written on my eyelids. Mrs. Bourland, I didn't forget to write my poem. My poem is about the power of silence and how you don't even need words to express your emotions.

That's why the paper is blank.

Mrs. Snow, I'm not calling my parents because I carelessly forgot one of my schoolbooks, I'm calling to remind them that I love them.

Mr. Spiegl, I wasn't asking a stupid question because of my lack of intelligence, I was asking for the benefit of others in case they missed the basics.

Guilt Trips

A compilation by Mrs. Pettus

Eighth-grade students recently read *A Separate Peace*,

which is set in the 1940's at a prep school in New Hampshire. The protagonist, Gene, causes his best friend and roommate, Finny, to fall from a tree, an accident which results in Finny's never being able to participate in sports again. Several students recalled events in their own lives

that are somewhat similar to those of the novel.

Will Hastings: I told my brother to toss a rock in the air, look at it, and dodge it as it came down. It cut his head a little because he wasn't fast enough. I apologized to him and then told my dad that he did it to himself.

Nicholas Burn: I was hammering in nails with a sledgehammer, but I missed the nail and hit my little brother's finger. I threw him an icepack, and he just went inside to rest on the couch.

Jimmy Okot: My friend Tedros and I were playing basketball, and he went in for a lay-up and the ball stuck. I took a rock as big as a fist and threw it hard. When it came down, I yelled, "Look out!" But he moved in the direction where the rock was landing, and it hit him on the head. He was knocked out. Neither of our parents was at home, so we just put some ice on his head.

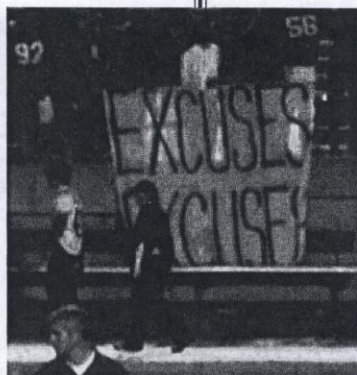
Andrew Snow: I live a boring life. I have never hurt anyone. (Sure, Andrew, we believe you.)

Mike Byrge: When my little brother and I were playing swords and fighting, I accidentally hit him on the head. Since my parents were not at home, I begged him not to cry and not to tell Mom and Dad. It turned out that he DID cry, and he DID tell Mom and Dad.

Jon Eisen: When I was eight, I went to my first overnight camp. The guys in my cabin, for some reason, started throwing rocks at the older girls' cabin, specifically at one girl. I hit the girl right in the middle of her forehead, and she had to get stitches. For the rest of the camp, I avoided her at all costs and did not tell anyone what I had done.

Will Adams: When I was nine, I swung a baseball bat and hit a kid in the stomach, making him cry. I said I was sorry, and after the game, I bought him a Coke and some candy with my own money.

John Moynihan: Last June, I was participating in a Black Belt test at my karate school. In the sparring section of the test, I accidentally punched my partner in the ribs and knocked the wind out of him. He started



Around MBA

gasping and was led off to sit down. I was scared for two reasons; I thought I had broken his ribs, and I knew that if I had hurt him, I would probably be thrown out of the test. Luckily, my friend was more surprised than hurt. I was in a slight state of shock for a while afterwards but sufficiently recovered to complete the test.

John Ramsey: I felt guilty when I broke my cousin's finger. We were playing football, and I tackled him. Little did I know, he landed right on his finger. He couldn't play any sports in the neighborhood for a while, and I felt guilty that he had to just sit and watch us play.

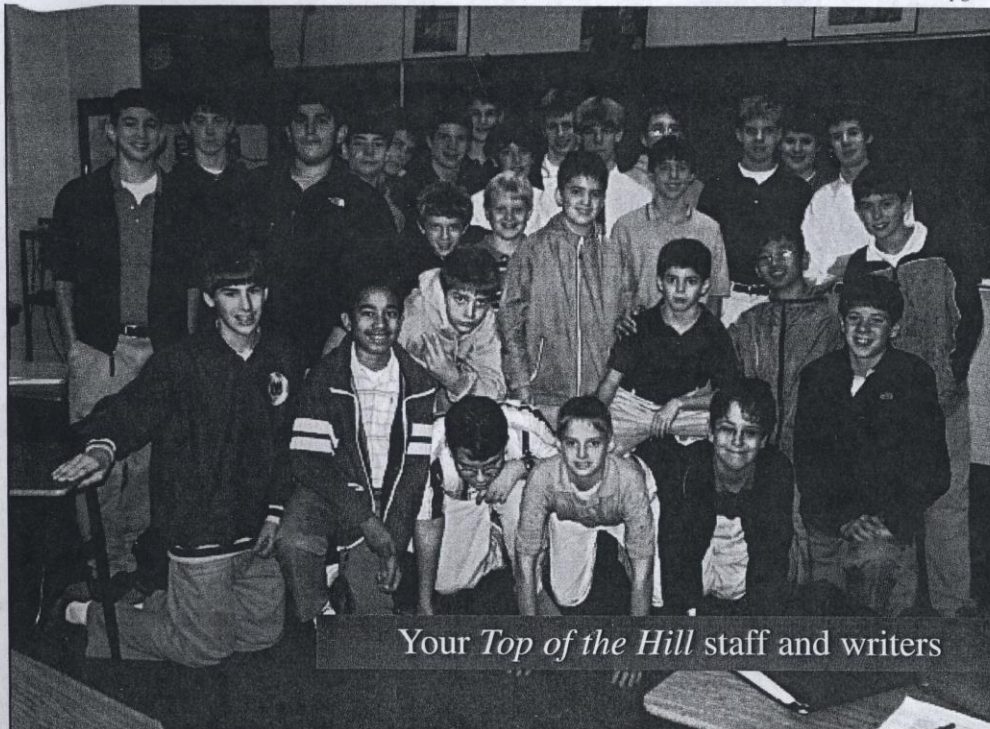
Andrew Harris: I was swinging a golf club through a clump of dead grass, and my friend's sister walked behind me. I hit her in the back of her head. I thought it was just a bump, and my friend said she would be okay. She ran into the house, and her mom called us into the house. Bloody rags were everywhere. I about fainted, and I sat in a chair worrying about what I had done. I apologized about twenty times and waited to be chewed out by her father, who was coming home from work. I did not get chewed out. While my family and my friend went to celebrate my mom's birthday, my friend's family went to the ER. After we had dinner, we went to Baptist Hospital, and there was my friend's

sister walking out of the building with stitches in her head. I had trouble sleeping that night, thinking of the mental disabilities she could have suffered.

Jay Milam: When I was about eleven, I put toothpaste all over the bathroom floor so that my sister would slip. She did slip and cut open her lip. I felt really bad, so my parents didn't punish me that much.

Jay Cole: When I was in kindergarten, I was out on the playground. I had been really annoyed with this one kid. I had been contemplating what I was going to do to him. Eventually I went over and

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Your Top of the Hill staff and writers

Orman's Opinions

CD Reviews

By Will Orman

P.O.D. - *Payable on Death*

After their strong LP *Satellite* in 2001, I myself was expecting a lot more from the new album. However, much like some of the poor quality stuff on the radio today, this album consists mainly of thrashing guitar and little real emotion.

"**Change the World**" uses weird vocal effects and has very weak, empty lyrics. "**Find My Way**" is an interlude for the album, and it has a nice change in tone to being more melodic and sometimes softer in between loud, powerful guitar. "**Revolution**" is Sonny's attempt to sound reggae and it has a very dull and elementary guitar solo. "**The Reasons**" is yet another break from toneless banging and uses layered vocals to harmonize, but the same lyrics are repeated often and the song is somewhat dampened. "**Freedom Fighters**" starts with distant vocals that focus on the guitars, but the chorus of exaggerated singing ruins the effect of the verses. "**I and Identify**" has the most monotonous guitar yet and very dull, repetitive lyrics that just make it worse. "**Eternal**" consists of only chords on



P.O.D. - *Payable on Death*

guitar in the background and a meandering six-minute solo in the foreground, and it is a closer so different from the tone of the entire album that it is out of place and useless.

Sonny's Christianized lyrics would be interesting if they were not so drowned out by the amateurish head banging guitar parts, and his voice would be better suited to the songs like "**Find My Way**" and "**The Reasons**" than the yelling he prefers in songs like "**Freedom Fighters**."

Highlights: "**Find My Way**," "**The Reasons**"

Letdowns: "**Change the World**," "**Revolution**," "**Freedom Fighters**," "**I and Identify**," "**Eternal**"

Overall Rating: 3.8 (definitely below average, but a few redeeming qualities)

The Strokes - *Room on Fire*

Following the very popular album *Is This It?* of 2001, the new album from The Strokes follows the suit of the first one: very catchy and the kind that sticks with you.

"**Reptilia**" is one of the best songs on the disc, with very deep vocals at the beginning and very addictive guitar riffs

that make it the kind you skip others to get to. "**12:51**" uses guitar strums with a steady drumbeat, the unique guitar line

sounds like a keyboard but more glowing, and the claps throughout the song accent the beats quite nicely.

"**Between Love & Hate**" has nearly inaudible and repetitive lyrics with a weak guitar line.

"**Meet Me in the Bathroom**" has differing guitar melodies and bass lines with independent vocals (not needing support from the guitar line)

and is a generally upbeat and perky song. "**The End Has No End**" uses brilliant guitar lines with similar tones to those in "**12:51**" along with heavy drums, a more aggressive guitar solo, and the strongest vocals on the album.

"**I Can't Win**" features another set of catchy guitar riffs and a sudden ending that makes for a good closer.

Julian Casablancas's amazing voice and the incredibly catchy guitar riffs and melodies of this album make it one of the best of the year, the type that you can't forget once you've heard it.

Highlights: "**Reptilia**," "**12:51**," "**Meet Me in the Bathroom**," "**The End Has No End**," "**I Can't Win**"

Letdowns: "**Between Love & Hate**"
Overall Rating: 8.4 (strong)



The Strokes - *Room on Fire*

Thank you for all
your support with
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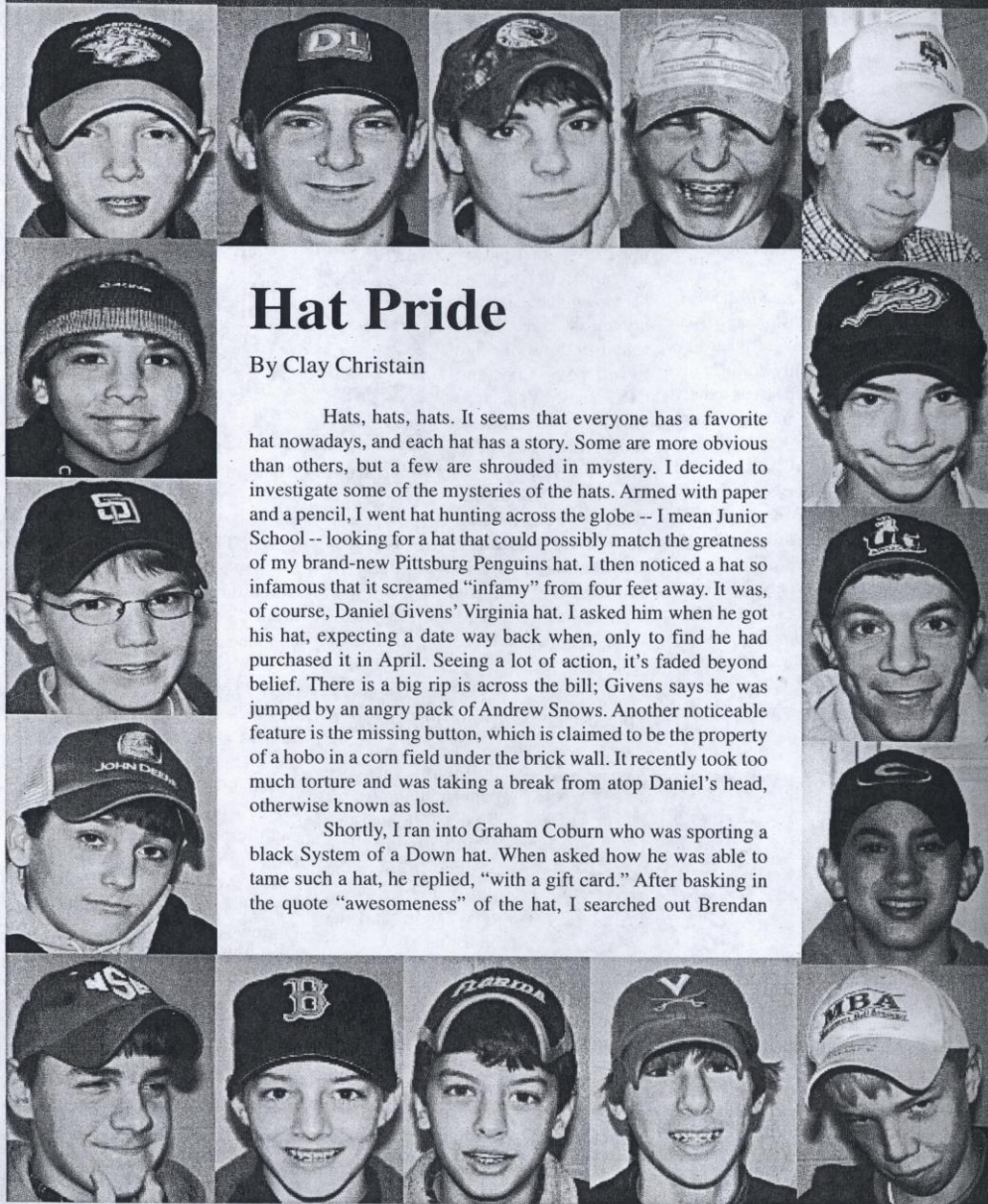
Hats on Parade

Hat Pride

By Clay Christain

Hats, hats, hats. It seems that everyone has a favorite hat nowadays, and each hat has a story. Some are more obvious than others, but a few are shrouded in mystery. I decided to investigate some of the mysteries of the hats. Armed with paper and a pencil, I went hat hunting across the globe -- I mean Junior School -- looking for a hat that could possibly match the greatness of my brand-new Pittsburg Penguins hat. I then noticed a hat so infamous that it screamed "infamy" from four feet away. It was, of course, Daniel Givens' Virginia hat. I asked him when he got his hat, expecting a date way back when, only to find he had purchased it in April. Seeing a lot of action, it's faded beyond belief. There is a big rip in across the bill; Givens says he was jumped by an angry pack of Andrew Snows. Another noticeable feature is the missing button, which is claimed to be the property of a hobo in a corn field under the brick wall. It recently took too much torture and was taking a break from atop Daniel's head, otherwise known as lost.

Shortly, I ran into Graham Coburn who was sporting a black System of a Down hat. When asked how he was able to tame such a hat, he replied, "with a gift card." After basking in the quote "awesomeness" of the hat, I searched out Brendan



Mayhew, keeper of the most mysterious hat of them all: the green, Woodpeckers hat. He had specifically remembered the date of which he had fought -- wait...bought -- the hat and placed it atop his noggin, March 24, 2002. When asked "what exactly ARE the Woodpeckers?" he replied, "Uhh a college team; I don't know which one." He then went on boasting on how it was "the best hat in the Junior School," even when a proven sighting of a replica was spotted on a high schooler's head.

The final stop on my Hat Hunt was to find none other than the master of all hats: Jon (JonJon) Eisen. Since he claims to have "100 hats," I figured he must have some great stories to tell. The truth is, he has no clue about what most of his hats have on them. He lists his favorites as the Chicago Cubs, Gonzaga Zags, and the strange Fighting Banana Slugs.

The search for the ultimate hat was a success, but I didn't have to go far; I just looked in the mirror.



Penguin Pride!



Max entertains the basketball crowd

Top Ten Seventh Grade Chess Players

By Chunbum Park

Connor-*****
Chunbum-*****
Hardin-*****
Drew-*****
Kenji-*****
Spencer-*****
Nicholas-*****
Karl-*****
Caldwell-*****
Davis-*****

Who are the top ten seventh

grade chess players? Connor, the inventor of the "Kill Chunbum in Few Moves"

strategy, has proven his ability by defeating many players, recording a checkmate without losing any piece. His wonderful queen strategy (not four-move checkmate) was

backfired by Chunbum's innovative "Defeat the Red Dumpling" strategy, which uses knight for protection and bugging the queen, at same time, bringing out most pieces possible. Hardin, who uses extreme strategies, has tied and lost against Chunbum through two games. His strategies are innovative but take a whole lot of time.

By the time he sets up the board, his strategy is messed up by his enemy's invasions. Drew, the one who defeated Chunbum in a chess match because of Chunbum's faulty mouse, plays the game with unthinkable chess strategies. One of his strategies, marching up the pawns only, trapping few of the knights and precious bishops, has proven effective during a match against

Chunbum.

Kenji, one of the "perfect" students in MBA, uses insulting remarks such as "you are not good enough" when playing chess to confuse the other player. It has proven its effectiveness, but not for long.

The players are confused the first time they play Kenji, but

after the first game, they adjust to Kenji's strategy of using insulting

remarks. Spencer uses a strategy called "I'm going to beat you," where he moves out his knights first and brings out his other precious pieces (just in case somebody uses his/her queen).

Nicholas plays as the game goes,

and he is usually the lucky one. Karl, who lost to Nicholas, is also a fine player. He's obsessed with chess as much as Hardin. Caldwell and Davis are also obsessed chess players. The only problem with them is that they do not play chess aggressively; they set up their board peacefully. These are all the top ten chess players.



Chunbum slashes the competition



Checkmate!

Taylor Smyth

A Mystifying Day in the Rainforest

By Taylor Smyth

It was just this previous summer when I experienced one of my most fantastic days. My family and I had arrived in Costa Rica, my ideal vacationing destination, about five days earlier. We had become frequent visitors to the nearby national park during the past few days, visiting it close to three times before this specific day. Every time we had observed in complete awe the mystical beauty of the rainforest. Every time we went we had been amazed to see countless types of animals, but nothing could compare to what was exhibited to us on this memorable day of my life.

It was near eleven o'clock, and the sun was glaring down at the magnificent landscape through a thin haze of snow-white clouds. This was to be our fourth venture into Manuel Antonio National Park. We had parked the rental car and were walking on the

moist sand towards the entrance. The tide was just now beginning to come in, making small ripples in a stream ahead. Making sure as to not dampen our pants, we gingerly forged the small stream and arrived at last to the ticket office. Four tickets were bought: one for my sister, one for me, and two for my parents. We made our way to the main resting area, a magnificent beach with trailheads nearby leading into the forest. After settling in and taking a quick dip in the refreshing water, my dad, my sister, and I decided to hike along a trail which we had not traveled before.



Invasion of the howler monkeys

shadows of the canopy above. Green was the dominant color; green of all shades dominated my vision while threads and spots of sunlight riddled the

ground.

Chirps, cracks, whistles, and many other sounds that are impossible to express in words filled my head as the walls of a concert hall soak in the music of an orchestra. Buttress roots arose from the forest floor standing up to six feet tall. I was engulfed by the forest at the time.

As we were crossing a small bridge spanning over a bubbling creek, the distinguishing event of the day occurred. A rustling commenced in the trees. It was first just an afterthought in the

back of my head but began to swell and expand, growing bigger and bigger. I had to look up; I had to see what this was. As I stopped and looked up, I noticed that my sister and my father had been curious about this sound too. They needed to spot the culprit also.

Dollops of black and red spotted the canopy. A loud noise boomed out from above. Was that a jaguar? No, it couldn't be; it's not the right color. The noise sounded again, even more powerful than the last. I snatched my binoculars hanging about my neck and peered up at the sky. I saw two eyes, a dark face, and a mouth stretched wide. I knew right there what it was. A pack of close to fifteen howler monkeys was above us, climbing about and booming out their distinctive calls.

They would jump from tree to tree, branch to branch; they would stop and have a quick scuffle. It was truly



...they left leaving us with nothing but a memory of the magic which they held, the mystifying greatness of the great outdoors.

The trail began along a series of climbs and descents, winding in a serpentine manner inside the

Continued on pg. 19

Hodge-Podge

Mars

By Lindsay Bohannon

After many years of launching satellites, unmanned space craft, and rovers, mankind finally achieved success on landing a vehicle on the red planet. The 300 million long miles to Mars took three and a half years. The NASA *Spirit* is to sit on the platform for nine days and then roll onto the Martian surface. The area of Sleepy Hollow, where it landed, is said to have some dust that could prevent the space craft from reaching its full potential. The spacecraft is one of two. The other spacecraft is scheduled to land in late January. Landing on Mars has opened a new gateway for mankind.



I don't see little green men.

Exams After Christmas?

Pros and Cons

By Clayton Cothran

Some of you might be thinking, "What? Is this guy crazy? There *are* no pros!" Believe me, I'm not (hmm, but the first stage *is* denial). Many of us have heard or have ourselves complained about having exams after Christmas Break. Surprisingly, the format of exam schedule and the exams after break do have some good points.

Such as:

Pro: More time to organize (notes,

quizzes, tests, homework, worksheets, etc.), study, and procrastinate from doing anything but spending hours just staring at a piece of paper that you had never seen before that organizational opportunity

Pro: A day (or two) break between each two exams

Pro: Time to relax as you study at home over two weeks instead of cramming for two nights

As you can see, there *are* some advantages to exams after break, but many of you are probably already thinking of some cons. So here are some that I have heard:

Con: Having to think about exams and studying over break

Con: Having three days of school for review that you already spent hours on along with review homework each night

Con: Mom and Dad constantly asking you (nagging and forcibly dragging you to your books) to get to your studying

Con: Those strange people you live with asking where you stand on your exam preparation
C o n : Having to constantly beat your siblings over the head with a stick to keep them away from your notes



What really happens to the blue books after exams

All in all, the teachers at MBA have been doing this for 137 years (I mean, they live here, right?), and they know best. Honestly, even though we should all thank our teachers for all the help that they have given us, most students would prefer exams before break.

The "B" Team

By Matthew Sternberg

The B Team this year had a great season, finishing with a record of 3-2-2. After tying Woodland Middle and Fairveiw Middle, the B team went on to beat Ensworth 6-0. For some unexplained reason, Matthew Sternberg got a penalty because he could jump the height of an Ensworth player. Then the team lost to a good BMS team in extremely bad conditions. In the last two games of the season, the team beat BGA and went on to beat USN 3-0 in a game that ended at halftime because of the monstrous storm approaching. Congratulations on a great year! Some players on the team earn nicknames, as follows:

Kenji "I want to play" Alexander
Drew "Nice move" Blackwell
Bo "They got stopped by the little dude" Buchanan
Wes "Injured list" Gallagher
Knight "Kanigit" Hammock
Jonas "Speed" Hill
Robert "Be quiet Robert" McNeilly
Max "Header" Molteni
Perry "Goal!" Webb
Daniel "Midget" Arteaga
Zan "You blocked my shot!" Berry
Matt "Here comes the cross" Sternberg
Robbie "I can't believe I didn't make the A team" Weikert
Nick "Get out of my way!" Williams
Ben "Brick Wall" Ramsaur
Daniel "RUN!" Green
J.B. "Chubs" Hardin
Tyler "Get out of my house!" Wright

Soccer

The Awesome 'A' Team

by Daniel Givens

After three very harsh days of conditioning and practicing, try-outs were finally over, adding two days to the rigorous schedule. The 'A' team consisted of Jonathon Haynes, Alex Darsinos, of course, Morey Hill, and Michael Nunan, and a cast of other characters. Coach K immediately scheduled a first-day practice, followed by a soccer game vs. surprisingly good, Freedom Middle School. We crushed them, and then we followed up by beating the Brentwood Middle School Team 3-2. We continued our practice and continued beating team after team, including D C A , F R A , Ensworth, and BA, and the MBA B-team, twice. Finally, the regular season came to a close with a boom, literally. Halfway through the M B A -

USN game, which was tied at 1-1, USN called an end to the game, resulting in a mutual tie due to thunder and lightning. Pssh. We got a bye in the first round of

the tournament and faced Ensworth again. Not as

spectacular as the first 6 or 8 or 9-0 victory the first time, we did beat them 4-1. Their only goal was in the first half, but our team, one referee, and even their team doubted the goal. We even had one of the dads taking photos, who caught the illegitimate goal, and he concluded that it was, indeed, not a goal. We faced rival Brentwood Middle School in

the finals. Both teams had improved very much from the beginning of the season. With 30 seconds left in the game, they got a cheap shot off of one of our player's feet into the goal, and the game was tied 2-2. We played them in overtime, and they scored one goal in the first round and scored again in the second overtime,

resulting in a 4-2 loss for us in double overtime. Alex Darsinos and Jonathan Haynes were named all HVAC players; Jimmy Okot was named Honorable Mention. Overall,

this was a great season. Many wins,

fortunately, but I cannot help but think that we became a bit too cocky in the end. We had dedicated coaches, talented players with unbelievable skill, and thankfully, a enormous amount of luck. Here are the traditional end-of-season nicknames for



"Matt 'I swear, guys, I'm going to score a goal this time' Ferrell"



Jimmy outdoes the competition

the team:

Coach 'I'm getting too old for this' Klausner

Jeff 'I can only freaky-dance' Glaser

Alex 'Why did I even come out for tryouts...' Darsinos

Jimmy 'the Nigerian Nightmare' Okot

Jonathan 'Coach: God! He is fast!' Haynes

Morey 'All HVAC' Hill

Robbie 'Annie' Alsenser

Grant 'I got some food' Gardener

Reed 'I show up for one day at tryouts and make the A team' Stanberry

Matt 'I swear, guys, I'm going to score a goal this time' Ferrell

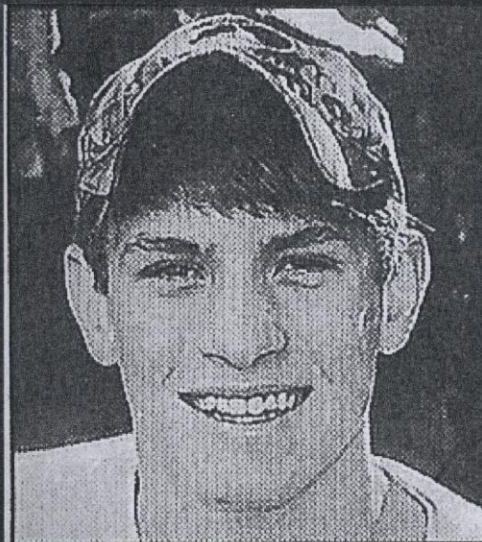
Michael 'the French-Canadian' Nunan

Perry 'The New Boy' Webb

Baker 'Jose!' Mulherin

Chad 'I would be playing but I broke my arm' Augusty

A Tribute. . .



Nicholas Caroland

by Lindsay Bohannon

We have lost a gentleman, scholar, and athlete. Nicholas Caroland was someone whose joyful spirit daily affected life at MBA. He was my neighbor; I remember when we were little, my sister, he, and I were trying to build a boat to float down Richland Creek. We were going to use milk bottles to keep it from sinking. It never really worked, but we had fun. I did not know him as well as my sister did, but I always was the one to tag along on their activities.

He liked a girl who lived in our neighborhood, and we got all the kids in the neighborhood to come together and make a heart-shaped leaf pile. My older sister went and got Julie and brought her to see it. Last year I would go over and throw lacrosse with him, and he told me how good the Hopkins Lacrosse Camp would make me. As many others, I will not forget Nicholas.

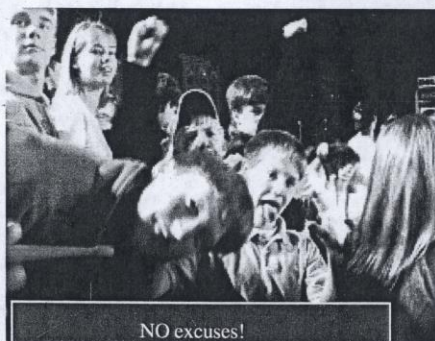
Microbe Moments



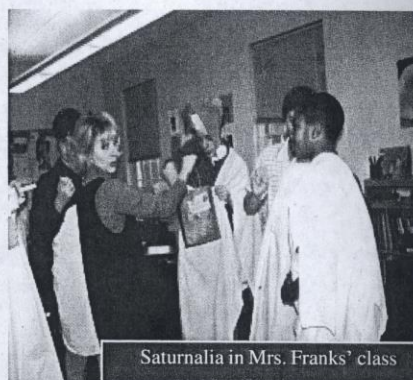
Bo cashes in for pizza



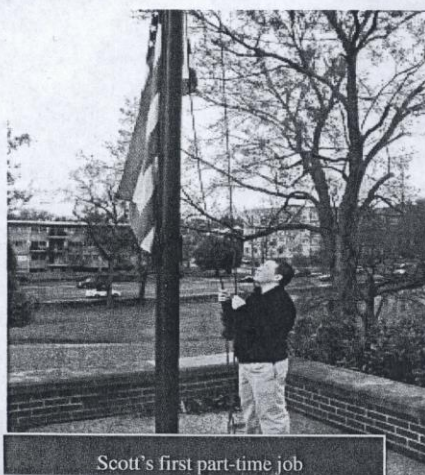
Mmmmm. . . pizza



NO excuses!



Saturnalia in Mrs. Franks' class

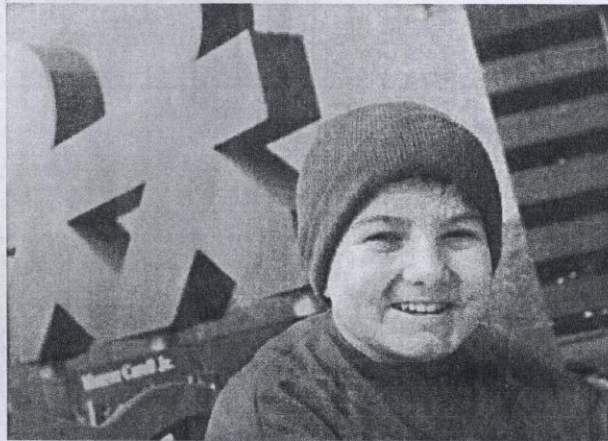


Scott's first part-time job



Check out that Clinic Bowl score!

Community Service



Clayton Cothran volunteers for Vanderbilt Children's Hospital and serves as this year's Youth Ambassador. He speaks at fundraisers, works with the Children's Miracle Network, and helps out at various hospital events. His relationship with the hospital began at age 11 when he had a rare infection. "I'm going to become a pediatric surgeon, because I know how kids will feel," Clayton said.

Clayton Cothran participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Vanderbilt's Children's Hospital as one of the live paper dolls.



Thanks to all who helped with the Buena Vista School Project! The students appreciate your kindness.

Hodge-Podge

Intel Processor Review

By Chunbum Park

Intel, a company that created the first microprocessor in 1971, is making the ingredients (ask Chunbum what this word means) of the computers. It creates processors, memory, and chipsets. Recently, it had created five processors, and it will create three next-generation processors around mid-2004. The five latest processors are Intel Pentium 4, Intel Celeron, Intel Pentium M, Intel Itanium 2, and Intel Xeon. Intel Itanium 2, which has a low cost and is powerful at same time, is for business applications; it is used in servers.

Intel Xeon is for servers and work-stations. It features Hyper-Threading Technology and Intel Netburst Microarchitecture. Intel Pentium M, which is for wireless mobile computing, has exploded in sales since March 2003. Intel Pentium M, unlike Intel Pentium 4, cancels out inactive programs, enabling itself to reduce its size and run at low power.

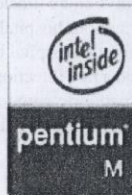
Intel Celeron processor, which is exceptional for value computing, offers good performance in word processing and runs popular applications. Even with these processors, three new processors are scheduled to hit the market around mid-2004. The three new processors are

new versions of Intel Pentium M, Dothan, Prescott, and the processor Grantsdale.

The new version of Intel Pentium M will be smaller and faster, and at the same time cheaper because of its size. Because companies demand Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity), Wi-Fi will be put into the new desktop processor,

Grantsdale. The sixth version of Pentium will be Prescott, a smaller version of Pentium IV to lower the cost. These are the next-generation products that are coming to

market around mid-2004.



**Congratulations
to Will Adams
on winning the
Geography Bee!**



**Announcing
The Rascoe Bond Davis Creative
Writing Competition
(for the seventh and eighth grades)**

Categories: Poetry and Fiction

Prizes: 1st place: \$50

2nd place: \$35

3rd place: \$10

**Please turn in all entries with a hard
copy and on a disk to Mrs. Bourland or
Mrs. Pettus by March 26, 2004**

Acharnians

Ctd. from Page 1

We began with a few scenes now and then, but rehearsals soon became more intense. We all had to go in every day after a while and were rehearsing one half of the play per day. We began doing full run-throughs earlier than we were supposed to because Chris Schuller (the lead role) had an Oxford interview in New York. The day he got back, we kicked it into high gear.

We began getting fitted for our costumes and found out what the set was to look like. Many of the cast came in on Saturdays to help build the set. We went into dress rehearsals on the week of the play. We were constantly making modifications and improvements to the set, including writing things that we aren't allowed to print in a "family paper" on the inside of the set. Finally, it was time for opening night.

Opening night went okay. A couple of people messed up lines, but it wasn't that bad. Oh, and remember the bassist's comeback to Schuller ("I'm old glory")? He had a new one every night.

Thursday's was lame. Friday's was better: "We're accomplished musicians!" *storms off



Graham brings justice to the Acharnians

stage.* Saturday was the worst show we did. Mr. Morrison described the audience as "a bunch of dead fish." But

Sunday was a great show if I remember correctly. It was also the last show, which is always rather sad.

After the play was over, we got rid of the set, signed posters, and said our goodbyes. Actually, there was a flood of emails to each of the cast members about the play. We all gave out our AIM screennames and clogged each other's mailboxes with emails. I'm pretty sure that that has never happened after a play. The amazing thing about this play is that it was the first play for four of the six eighth-graders involved. The *really* amazing part was that they gave awesome performances--especially Johnny Mishu, who started rehearsals late and had to memorize his lines in a very short time. I'm sure that these guys will never forget their first MBA play experience.

Ctd. from Page 12

amazing to watch. These dark spots the size of a normal dog would move so gracefully through the trees, incorporating every muscle into every move.

It was as if they had five legs: front, back, and of course their tail. But they could not linger here forever; the time had come for the magnificent creatures to depart.

There was a break in the canopy above our trail of about six feet. One by one the monkeys leaped across the break, each one landing nimbly on his chosen target. After all had jumped, one was left. This last member of the clan happened to be an infant. It had decided that it could not make the leap of faith and began to

let out a whine to its mother.

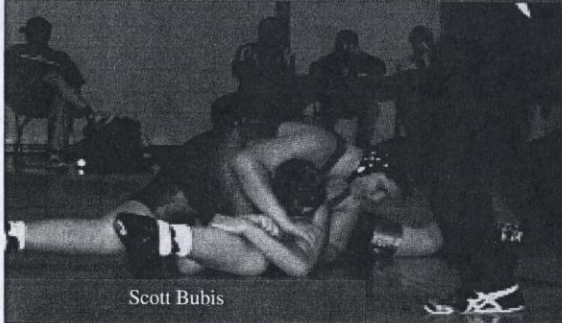
The males, obviously, did not approve of this behavior; they were ready to leave. And so, the booming calls began once more, louder and more dreadful than ever. It sounded as if I were trapped under a constant wave of sound; the first to my left was the squeaking whine of the young child's despair, and the second to my right was the pounding calls of the males.

At long last, a female, the mother I presumed, made its way across the break to console her poor child, trapped between the hole in the trees. The young one eagerly climbed on the mother's back and journeyed

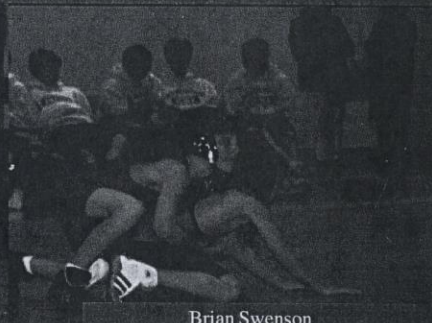
across the treacherous hole, only to greet an angry throng of males. They left leaving us with nothing but a memory of the magic which they held, the mystifying greatness of the great outdoors.

As we were driving home from the park that day, I began to think about my experience once more. I realized that what I saw was a very rare occurrence. I not only saw animals themselves in the wild, but I also saw behavior in animals too. I saw that animals can and will think like humans sometimes, which was so clearly exhibited to me in my experience earlier that day. I will always remember that day, that magnificent day in the rainforest, as clearly as daylight.

Wrestling



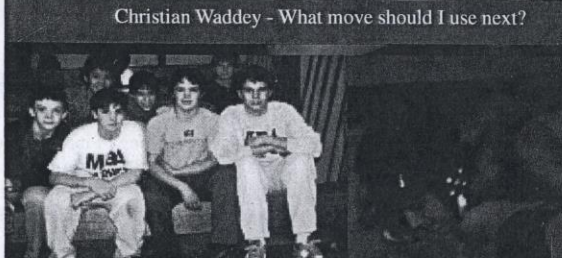
Scott Bubis



Brian Swenson



Christian Waddey - What move should I use next?



JonJon Eisen - I can't breathe!

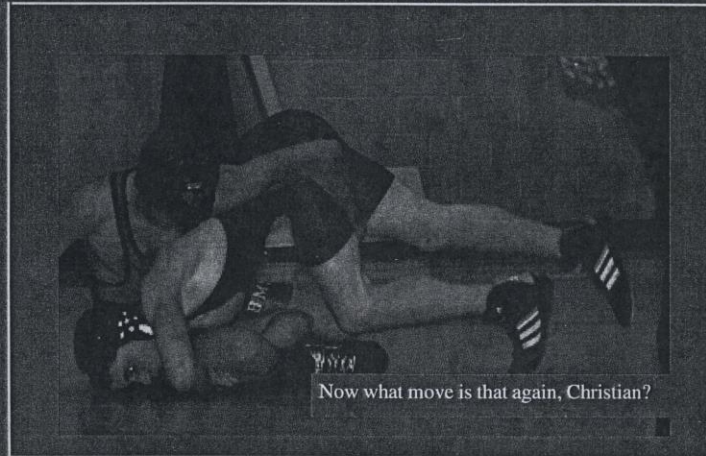


Andy McLaughlin



John Moynihan - I can't breathe either!

3rd in the HVAC



Congratulations to our wrestling team on their 3rd place finish!

Finishing first: Tee Stumb, Christian Waddey, and Jeff Francis

Finishing second: Andy McLaughlin

Finishing third: Patrick Hallahan

Finishing fourth: Jon Eisen

Guilt Trips

pushed him; he fell and broke his arm. I felt so bad that I grounded myself.

Johnny Mishu: I threw a kid in some mud and scratched his arm. My mom was his doctor! She asked me how it happened, and I said that it was an accident. After a few days of stomach cramps and headaches, I mustered up the courage and told my parents I did it on purpose. I felt a lot better, but I was grounded for two weeks.

Robert Rolfe: When I was playing baseball at age ten, a ball was hit high in the air. I was the pitcher, and my friend was the shortstop. It was hit in our area, and he called it before me, and we smacked together. I knocked him clean off his feet and took him out of the game. I was very embarrassed and said "sorry" a thousand times.

Sloan Sanders: I shot my little brother in the eye with a nerf gun. Even though I did not mean to, my mom still got mad at me.

Matt Ferrell: I was supposed to be watching my sister, but I just sent her upstairs with the dog. The dog scratched her right between the eyes, and she had to go get stitches and miss a day of school.

Taylor Colbert: I pushed my younger brother down the steps. He cracked his head open and had to get stitches. I did not tell the truth for a

while, but eventually my parents found out.

Jimmy Anderson: I pushed my little sister, and she cracked her head open on a chair. My parents weren't home, and my babysitter called 911. The fire trucks came. I was scared out of my mind. I thought I would get arrested, and I begged the firemen to forgive me. I was nice to my sister for a long time after that.

Daniel

Arteaga: One mid-October day, my brother David was found swinging a yellow dog leash in our living room, which

is full of glass. I, the same one, tried to take it away to prevent destruction, and the scene soon became the site of a tug-of-war between me and my siblings. I would have won, but my siblings, being the "geniuses" they are, devised a plan to let go and watch me fall backwards. The action backfired, resulting in David's cracking his head on a glass table. An hour later, David came out of the doctor's office with what he called "extremely cool stitches." I felt guilty and spent most of the day seeing to his every whim. It took me a little while to realize that other than the dent in his brain, David was fine. I was

grounded for two weeks, but no glass tables were injured in the incident.

Walter Corn: One time, my sister and I were fighting, and she pushed me onto the bed. I got so mad that I threw her at it, but she went over it and hit her head on the wall. Her head made a hole the size of a baseball. I felt kind of sorry and guilty, so I helped her do her chores around the house and still had to give her my allowance.

Tee Stumb: When I was in the sixth grade, I broke a kid's arm wrestling. I felt so sorry for him because we were on the same team. I sent him cookies and cupcakes, and we are now good friends.

Bennett Davidson: One time my sister was looking through a keyhole, and I stabbed her eye with a straw. (Actually, I had told her to put her eye up to the keyhole.) She started bleeding a little bit. I felt really guilty, so I entertained her and was her "slave" for a while.

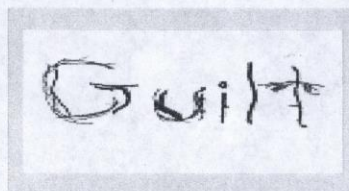
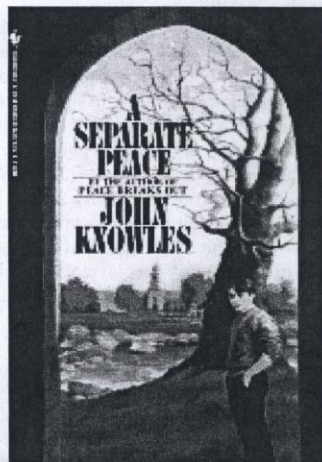
Rob Broadhurst: My cousins and I told my sister to run and hit a mattress. She did as we said, but we moved the mattress so that she hit the ground and broke her collar bone. I was really sorry and stayed home with her for a while.

Jimmy

Russell: One time my sister and I were having contest of who could jump down the most stairs at once. I pressured her into doing this, and when she did, she hit a light bulb

with her head and got cuts all over her forehead. I got her a bunch of band-aids and soothed her until she stopped crying.

Daniel Givens: In fourth grade, I asked my friend, "Have you tried the Slim Fast Diet lately?" She gave me the silent treatment for three months, which I deserved. Finally, I apologized, and we became friends





**BILLY BOB THURMOND
STARRING IN
*BAD SANTA***

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